EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:

1.   A file sharing system having, a peer-to-peer file sharing network of the type including:

at least one first file storage for storing primary files to be shared; and

at least one primary client module connected to the first file storage for downloading files from the first file storage and from other clients over the network, and for uploading files to the first file storage and to other clients in the network,
the improvement comprising:

a secondary file storage for storing secondary files;

a secondary client module connected to the primary client module for downloading secondary files from the secondary file storage, for forming a composite file by appending a secondary file to each primary file downloaded by the primary client module and for causing the primary client module to upload only the composite file.

2.   A system according to Claim 1 wherein the primary file, secondary file and composite file are all media files with an ID tag appended thereto identifying the content of the files.

3.   A system according to Claim 2 wherein the secondary client module includes a means for interrogating the ID tag of a primary file for selecting a secondary file compatible with the ID tag.

4.   A system according to Claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein the secondary client module is integrated with the client module of the peer-to-peer file sharing network through an application programming interface.

5.   A system according to any one of Claims 1 to 4 wherein the secondary file storage includes a management console to monitor and control all uploaded secondary files.

6.   A system according to any one of Claims 1 to 5 wherein the secondary file storage stores, displays, and reports statistical information about secondary files uploaded to the secondary client module.

7.   A method of operating a peer-to-peer file sharing network including:

at least one first file storage for storing primary files to be shared;

at least one client connected to the first file storage for downloading files from the first file storage and from other clients over the network, and for uploading files

5   to the first file storage and to other clients in the network,

said method comprising:

providing a secondary file storage

storing secondary files in the secondary file storage;

downloading a primary file;

10   downloading a secondary file;

forming a composite file by appending a secondary file to the primary file; and

uploading the composite file to the network.

8.   A method according to Claim 7 further comprising the steps of:

15   receiving a request for a primary file from a user through the client module;

identifying a primary file ID tag forming part of the primary file;

matching the primary file ID tag with a compatible secondary file;

downloading the compatible secondary file to the client module;

20   forming a composite file by appending the compatible secondary file to the primary file; and

uploading the composite file to said user

9.   A method according to Claim 7 or 8 wherein the secondary file is dynamically appended to the primary file.

25   10.   A method according to Claim 7 or 8 further comprising including in the composite file an encrypted data segment to prevent unauthorized decoupling of the secondary file and the primary file.

11.   A method according to Claim 10 further comprising decoding the encrypted data segment, decoupling the secondary file from the primary file and

appending a new secondary file to the primary file.

12.   A method according to any one of Claims 6 to 11 including recording statistical information about the downloading and uploading of secondary files.